

Gospel Comfort under heavy Tidings

THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A
SERMON,

Delivered at
MIDDLEBOROUGH,

FEBRUARY 5, 1769.

Upon hearing of the Death of a godly Mother,

By ISAAC BACKUS,

PASTOR of a CHURCH there.

To which is added,

Some MEMORIES of her LIFE.

PROVIDENCE:

Printed by JOHN CARTER, at Stephen's Press,
M.DCC.LXIX.

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OF A

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MIDDLEBOROUGH

FEBRUARY 22 1769

Upon hearing of the Death of a pious Minister

BY ISAAC BAKER

Pastor of a Church

To which is added

Some MEMOIRS of his LIFE

REVISED BY

Printed by John Carter at the Press of the

M.DCC.LXXIX

GOSPEL COMPOS

OR

MOURNERS.

I. THESSALONIANS, II. 14.

For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will come with him.

ONE peculiar excellency of the gospel revelation is, that it opens a glorious prospect beyond the grave, where nature can see nothing but darkness. In those gloomy regions where the light of nature (which is evaded up by many) can see nothing but perpetual night, the gospel opens a morning which shall never have an evening.

Many of the heathen had some confused notions of the future existence of the soul, but they never dreamt of the resurrection of the body. Hence when the Apostle Paul was at Athens, that great seat of learning in the heathen world, though the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers could hear him upon other points, yet when he came to the doctrine of the resurrection, they *mocked* at it, as a matter too absurd to deserve a hearing. Such a miserable guide is *heavenly wisdom*. And hence

of the Thessalonians had been lately turned from those dark ways, the Apostle takes care, among other important articles, to instruct them in this great point, that they might not *sorrow* for their Christian friends, *as others which have no hope*. No hope of ever seeing or enjoying them again, as if they were lost in the grave. He does not forbid all sorrow; no, it is given as a mark of an abandoned people, when the righteous were taken away, and *no man laid it to heart*. Isa. lvii. 1. Jesus himself wept over his friend Lazarus, yet an immoderate sorrow is to be guarded against; *for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*.

The particular occasion of my reading these words to you at this time, is the tidings I have just received of the death of my dear godly mother*, though they afford many important instructions which deserve the constant notice of every soul. They may naturally lead us to consider what it is to be in Jesus; that death is but a sleep to such, and that God will wake them up, and bring them with him in the great day.

1. What is it to be in Jesus? For if we are not first in him, we cannot sleep in him. Answer, 1. It is by faith to take him as our refuge from all evil. In our fallen state we like the *slayer* are exposed to the *avenger's* stroke continually, from which no natural nor Christian friends can secure us; our houses are no defence, neither are the strongest holds that nature or art can afford: No-
thing

* Mrs. Elizabeth Backus, of Norwich, who died January 26, 1769, in the 71st year of her age.

thing but the refuge which God has provided to secure us. The city of refuge was an emblem of our glorious Saviour, who by his obedience and satisfaction has brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe; which secures them from the dreadful sentence of the law: For there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus: *for his own mouth has declared, that they shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life. Rom. iii. 22. and viii. 1. John v. 24.* Souls will not fly to this refuge till they see their danger; hence appears the necessity of the law, as a school-master, to bring us to Christ. When Israel heard its thunderings from Mount Sinai, they saw that they should die if they had not one to stand between God and them; and when any soul effectually hears the law, it is alarmed to fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. *Heb. vi. 18.* A view of which hope will make the soul gladly quit all its own stuff, that it may win Christ, and be found in him. *Phil. iii. 8, 9.* Who is also a refuge from every enemy.

The strong man armed would fain drag us to ruin, but Jesus has conquered him, and taken away all his armour, so that he can't hurt any saint. Indeed the serpent will shew his venom at their heel; but the God of peace shall bruise him under their feet shortly. *Rom. xvi. 20.* Persecutors often take crafty counsel against them, but 'tis in vain, for they are *bidden ones*: Their life is hid with Christ in God. *Psa. lxxxiii. 3. Col. iii. 3.* Believers are in the midst of a world of troubles, yet God is their refuge and strength, and such a present help therein, that

that he makes all to work together for their good. He is a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst of them : Which leads me to observe,
 20. That to be in Jesus is to have a *living union* with him, as the branch hath with the vine. As natural life is lost when the union between soul and body is dissolved ; so our spiritual life was lost by revolting from God, and is recovered only by reconciliation and union with him. By the divine spirit the soul is cut off from nature's stock, and grafted into Christ, the true vine, where by they have such a vital union with him as to receive strength and nourishment from him, to bring forth fruit to the Father's glory ; without which union and communion, they *wither*, and can *do nothing*. Rom. xi. 24. John xv.—The great Apostle of the Gentiles says, “ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” And again, “ I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Those who thus walk in Christ as they have received him, are truly happy in life, as no others are, and death is far from putting a period to their felicity ; so far from it, that it puts an end to all their toils and troubles, and brings them to their rest. Hence observe,

21. That death is but a *sleep* to those who are in Jesus. This metaphor is often used to describe the saints departure. Christ himself said, “ our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” The aptness of the similitude may be seen in these particulars :

1. Sleep is peculiarly for the body. While that is asleep, the thoughts often rove far and wide, and sometimes God has appeared to and conversed with

With the soul while the body slept: so in this case, when the body returns to the earth, the *soul* returns unto God who gave it. *Ecc. iii. 7.* Some have advanced a conceit of the soul's sleeping with the body till the resurrection, but that is a most stupid notion, contrary to the whole book of God. Our Saviour shewed to the Sadducees, that God's saying I *am* the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; clearly proved that they then had a *living* existence, as well as should hereafter have their bodies raised. *Luke xx. 38.* And he said to the penitent thief, "to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Also in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he is so far from countenancing this notion, that he shews how hell-flames will wake up the soul which was stupid before, and give it a keen sense of its own torments, and apprehension of the saints happiness, even while his brethren remained in this world, and needed to take warning of their danger.

2. Sleep is for the night, after the season for labour is closed. This life is often compared to a day, in which important labour and business is to be done, and it discovers great stupidity not to attend thereto in its season. Hence that sharp reprimand, "why stand ye here all the day idle?" *Math. xx. 6.* Jesus spake and acted as a pattern for his people, when he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, wherein no man can work." Tho' we have not the same works in many respects to do that he had, yet each one has a work assigned him by him who sent us into the world, and whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we ought to do with our might,

might, since there is no device, work or knowledge in the grave, whither we are going.

3. The sleep of a labouring man is sweet. It is emphatically so with those who have laboured for God, and have spent their time and strength in his service. It is said of David, that *after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell asleep.* And he says of himself, "thou art my

"hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from
"my youth; I will hope continually, and will praise
"thee more and more. I will go in the strength
"of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy
"righteousness, even of thine only. O God,
"thou hast taught me from my youth; and hi-
"therto I have declared thy wondrous works:
"Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O
"God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy
"strength unto this generation, and thy power
"to every one that is to come." *Psa. lxxi. 5,*

14, 16—18. Thus he ascribes all the honour to God in the fullest manner, while he enjoys great comfort in his own soul, on a review of the part he had been enabled to act in life, and with a prospect of the glorious morning when he shall be brought up again from the depths of the earth.

Verse 26. A like view made Paul say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." *2 Tim. iv. 6—8.*

I am far from thinking that rich grace may not now as well as formerly be displayed, if God will, at the last hour, to such as have spent their life in sin, so as to give a joyful prospect of glory; yet for souls to neglect the great salvation, with a notion of obtaining such mercy hereafter, is an evil which

which we have as great warnings against, as any one that is mentioned in the bible. How full to this purpose is *Prov.* i. 22 to the end, and v. 31—34. What distress can be like mourning at the last, with this keen reflection, "how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!" Hence we have that call often inculcated, "to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." On the other hand, Peter enforceth his exhortation to the saints, to give *all diligence to add to their faith virtue, &c.* by this motive, *that so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* And he thought it meet, as long as he was in this tabernacle, to stir them up, by putting them always in remembrance of these things. *2 Peter*, i. 5—13. Again.

4. Sleep gives relief from the toils and troubles of the day; to those who *die in the Lord, from henceforth rest from their labours.* *Rev.* xiv. 13. Indeed here the antetype goes far beyond the type, for common labourers have only a short respite, and then return to their task again; but those who sleep in Jesus, from henceforth rest for ever from their labour, yea, and from every thing disagreeable; for they go where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Yet 'tis far from the sluggard's paradise, for while the Prophet shews, that, in opposition to all unhappiness, the righteous are taken away *from the evil to come, and enter into peace and rest in their beds,* he shews, at the same time, that in distinction from all stupidity, each one is *walking in his uprightness.* *Isa.* lvii. 2. The soul is joining with angels, and the spirits of just

men made perfect, while the body sleeps in the dust. And,

5. Sleep is but for a night, to wake in the morning with fresh vigour: So shall it truly be with the saints. Though in this world they are often neglected or abused by such as trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; yet Death shall feed upon them, and the upright shall have dominion over them, *in the morning*. Psa. xlix. 14. O glorious morning! Then will the righteous be *satisfied*, when they awake in the divine *likeness*. Psa. xvii. 15. Which leads us to consider;

3. That God will wake up those who sleep in Jesus, and bring them with him in the great day. This is the certain consequence of Christ's death and resurrection; which is the foundation of all our hopes. The resurrection is not a doctrine of natural, but of revealed religion, and is built upon God's promise through his Son, who therefore resolved the error of those who formerly denied this doctrine into two points; their not knowing the *scriptures*, nor the power of God. *Matt. xxii. 29*. Not knowing the scriptures, which reveal it, nor the power of God, which will perform it. And those who deny the resurrection of the body in our day, err in the same points; but let infidels set up reason against revelation ever so much, and say, "how can this flesh, which moulders in the dust, or is scattered in the air or water, ever be raised again?" Yet if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *even so* them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. He that gives up this doctrine forfeits the name of a Christian, for if the dead

dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. xv. 16, 17, 20. And as surely as he arose and ascended to heaven, so surely will he come again with power and great glory, and will speak with such authority, that all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth. *John* v. 28, 29. That morning will be as joyful to the righteous, as it will terrible to the wicked.

But how will the saints then appear? Our ideas thereof are very imperfect. The beloved disciple says, *it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.* Well that is enough for the heaven-born soul, whose language is, "then shall I be satisfied, when 'I awake in thy likeness!'" Yet the Apostle Paul has given some lively descriptions of this affair, in 1 Cor. xv. 42—44. Alluding to the quickning of seed that is sown, he says, "it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." 'Tis the same body, though gloriously changed; therefore he adds, that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." And elsewhere he tells us, that the Saviour shall *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. Then shall the saints be satisfied with likeness to him, both in body and soul, and he will bring them with him; None will be left behind, but all shall be caught up

together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be openly acquitted and blessed by the great Judge; and to crown the whole, shall be EVER WITH THE LORD.

These things may teach us,

1. The importance of looking each one to his own case: Are we in Jesus or not? No question can be of greater weight to us, therefore my friends pass it not over slightly. Have you been made to know the dreadfulneſs of being without Chriſt, without God in the world? And have you been driven out of every other refuge, ſo as to take ſanctuary in Chriſt alone? One peculiar excellency of the knowledge of him is, that it transforms the ſoul into his likeneneſs: Hence John gives this as the reaſon why the ſaints *know* that when he ſhall appear they ſhall be *like him*, namely becauſe they *ſhall ſee him as he is*. 1. John, 3. 2. The views they have of him now, through a glaſs darkly, cauſe a ſelf-loathing for their former actings againſt him, and a longing after conformity to him in heart and life: Hence they juſtly conclude, that when their views of him come to be perfect, their likeneneſs will be ſo alſo; and this is the mark they ſteer for, and the prize they preſs after: Therefore the apoſtle aſſerts in the next words, that, *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure*. Have we truly this hope or not?

2. This doctrine may afford much ſupport and encouragement to the faithful, in all their labours and ſorrows here. Theſe are but for a day, which is ſwiftly paſſing, and though ye may bear the burthen and heat of it, yet the ſhadows of the evening draw on apace, when you ſhall reſt from your labours,

hours, and reap the happy fruits of them for ever. James's exhortation is full to this purpose: Having spoken of the suffering which the just are exposed to in this world, he turns to them and says, *be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* Jam. v. 7, 8. Doth the husbandman pursue his labours, and patiently go through the toils of summer with the hope of a future harvest, and shall not the believer shew equal diligence and constancy in his father's vineyard? Did I say equal? Yea much greater; for the one labours for the meat that perisheth, while the other's labours are for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto them. *John* 6. 27. The husbandman has no certain security but that all his labours may prove fruitless; but the exhortation to the saints to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, is enforced with this motive, *that ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* *1 Cor.* xv. 58.

3. What reproof may these things administer, to those who are wasting the hours of life in idleness or mischief, instead of regarding the great things which concern their peace? Many behave as if they had nothing to do but to live at ease, and gratify the flesh upon the fruits of others labours: But this is as contrary to the end of our being, as death is to life; for those who *live in pleasure, are dead while they live.* They invert the true order of things, and *sleep away the day,* till ere they are aware

aware the *night* cometh, when no man can work. And alas! how doleful will that night be to them! An eternal night, without the least rest! They had been *dreaming* of many years of ease and merriment, till they *slipt into destruction as in a moment, and are utterly consumed with terrors*, Psa. lxxiii. 18, 19. Once they had no ears to hear the cries of the poor or of the oppressed, but now they will find that those cries have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts, who will avenge their cause. Then those who have laid up treasure for themselves, and have not been rich towards God, will find that the good creatures which they have abused shall be *witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as it were fire*. Luke xii. 21. Jam. v. Ah woful case! Now therefore awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.

Perhaps some may think they are not wasting the day in idleness, because they are busily engaged; but what is it about? Why they are careful and troubled about many things, and yet neglect the one thing needful. Jesus says, *seek FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*. And what a wretched plea would it be before his bar, for the soul to say, "I had so many concerns of my own, that I had no time to attend to the one thing needful!" A man of great note in the world, once cried out *anear* on the view of eternity, "alas! I have spent all my life in laboriously doing nothing!"

Once more,

4. These great truths may afford much support under the loss of Christian friends. Did I say *loss*? Must I not retract the expression? For we are not wont

went to call our weary friends lost, when they are got to rest in a quiet sleep; and none sleep so quietly as those who sleep in Jesus. They are beyond all danger of having their repose disturbed for ever. They have done their work, and are receiving their reward; have fought the good fight, and are shouting the glorious victory; and shall we begrudge them their happiness! Rather let us congratulate their safe arrival to the realms of peace. Yet what will become of us who are left behind? The righteous are taken away from the evil to come. The same day that righteous Lot went out of Sodom, fire and brimstone destroyed them all; and the prophet says, *except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom.* Surely then 'tis a loud call to us when any of this remnant are taken away; and he is a stupid creature who does not *lay it to heart.* - But what shall we lay to heart?

1. We should lay to heart the *evil of sin.* Had we never known sin, we should not have known death. Sin is the cruel murderer that destroys families and nations, and lays our dearest friends in the dust; and can we mourn their departure, and yet harbour the murderer! Can we take this viper into our bosoms! All our sorrows in life, and all the terrors of death, are but so many discoveries of what this monster has done; and still we see but a little part of his mischiefs. Look to Calvary, and behold the Prince of life in the agonies of death; a scene which made the sun hide its face, the earth to quake, and the rocks to rend asunder; and shall not this rend our rocky hearts! For he endured all this because he was *made sin for us.*

2. Let

2. Let us lay to heart that *time is short*. Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? How many are already gone? We find they are daily going, and every one must draw after them, as there are innumerable before them. We are all but transient persons here, and are hastening to another world, as fast as time can carry us: O therefore let us use the world as not abusing of it, for the fashion thereof passeth away.

3. Let us lay to heart the vast importance of Being *always ready*. The shortness of time, the uncertainty of life, the terrors of death, with many other considerations, loudly inculcate this lesson; but nothing can enforce it more than the glorious blessings which are to be enjoyed therein. What blessings does our Lord pronounce on those who are *found watching*? And James says, *behold we count them happy which endure*. Them who have endured the rage of earth and hell, and have ended their race with peace or with triumph, we count them happy: Well, says he, *my brethren, take them for an example of suffering affliction and of patience*. Jam. v. 10, 11. Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous, but his desires were vain, while he still loved the wages of unrighteousness. True desires to die their death, will engage us to live their life.

These things deserve the constant regard of every one, and they call for our special and particular notice, who have been lately bereaved of a godly relative. Paul speaks of some who were *in Christ before him*: And I have abundant reason to think that my dear Mother was in Christ before I was born; and when he granted a glorious visitation of his

his spiritual presence to this land, in the year 1741, is was as welcome and joyful a season to her as his personal coming was to Elizabeth of old. O how freely did she speak of the wonders of redeeming grace, to her children and others round! And I believe very few have lived with more constant devotedness to God than she has done ever since. Many may doubtless be apt to attribute this to the power of natural affection; and I am not insensible that the dead are often extolled extravagantly; but shall others lies make us afraid to speak the truth, and cause us to cover with obscurity those whom God says shall be in *everlasting remembrance*? Psa. cxii. 6. Yet I am not going to advance any encomiums of my own, only shall beg leave presently to annex a few of her own testimonies to vital religion, which I trust will justify what I have now said. In the mean time, my brethren, may all your prayers be unto God for us who are bereaved, that we may rightly improve this providence; that we may neither despise his chastnings, nor faint under his rebukes.

The stroke is aggravated by our distance, which prevented our knowing any thing of Death's approach till she is gone. O affecting thought! Gone so that we shall see her face no more; no more enjoy her delightful and instructive conversation. But stay; is she gone from our world of sin and snares? gone from our grovelling converse, to join the general assembly above, and can we wish her back again!

"*Ye then that mourn, suppress the pious tear;
 "You wish her out of Heaven to wish her here."*
 Yet surely we have cause to be humbled under

God's mighty hand, which has given this stroke; and oh that the bitterness of this stroke might im- bitter sin to our souls! May it bring eternal things in nearer view, and rouse us all from our stupidity, so that we may no more be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

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APPENDIX,

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING SOME

Memories of Mrs. BACKUS's Life.

MRS. ELIZABETH BACKUS was descended from one of the first planters of *Norwich*; and was born there on *April 6, 1698*. Her father, Mr. JOHN TRACY, was a man eminent for vital and practical religion, who died on *March 27, 1726*, with such comfortable views of another world, that he charged his friends to give him up, and not hold him any longer with their prayers. He was very strict in the religious education of his family, which this daughter of his was ever thankful for as long as she lived; yet she was fully convinced that none of these things would stand her instead in the trying day, without a new heart; and she has often mentioned to her children a work of conviction and conversion which she experienced about the year 1721. And though I have not met with any record thereof, yet in an old paper I find she has set down some hints of her soul-exercises afterwards, which discover an early concern to have her heart as well as life conformed to God. In *April 1725* she writes thus; "by afflictions of late
" I have been awakened to see I have been asleep,
" and I desire to be humbled for my sin, and do
" desire the Lord would go on still to awaken me,

“ and give me a humble, meek and quiet spirit,
 “ which is in the sight of God of great price.”
 And she sets down this passage from Mr. *Wilcox* :
 “ It is well for us that it is ill with us ; if it were
 “ not bad, it would be worse. We ought to be
 “ thankful to God for crossing us ; for woe be to
 “ us if he let us alone ; it is ten to one but hearts
 “ desires and lean souls would go together.” To
 which she subjoins these words : “ Some time ago I
 “ met with some crosses, which overcame me with
 “ melancholy, and almost disabled me for the do-
 “ ing of any duty : I happened to see a passage in
 “ Mr. *Baxter*’s treatise about overmuch sorrow,
 “ which convicted me of my sin in this matter :
 “ It was this ; the cause, says he, is sinful impa-
 “ tience : Discontents and cares proceed from a sin-
 “ ful love of some bodily interest, and not taking
 “ Heaven for a satisfying portion.”

She was married to Mr. SAMUEL BACKUS Ja-
 nuary 18, 1716, with whom she lived in great ami-
 ty, as well as considerable prosperity, till he was
 taken away on November 24, 1740, when she was
 left with eleven children, the youngest being not
 six weeks old, and she in so weakly a state as not
 to be able to go to meeting till the next summer.
 However she then found the truth of that word,
though weeping endureth for a night, joy cometh in the
morning. The morning of that glorious day of
 grace, in 1741, shed its kind beams on her family,
 (as well as through the land) and hopefully brought
 a great part of her children to the saving know-
 ledge of HIM, who is a father of the fatherless,
 as well as a judge of the widows, in his holy habi-
 tation. Some brief account of these things I find
 written

written with her own hand thus: " In the fall of
" the year 1740 we were all taken sick with the
" measles, and it pleased God to afflict me in taking
" away my husband. And now in this time of dis-
" stress I saw so much of the evil and wickedness of
" my own heart, that I thought God was justly
" afflicting of me: I saw I had been asleep.—As I
" was walking in my house in great heaviness, these
" words were cast into my mind: *In the world ye*
" *shall have tribulation*: They turned in my mind
" an hundred times, and were of great support to
" me. Again, as I was musing on my own and fa-
" mily's circumstances at present (being now left
" a widow, with many small children) and com-
" paring it with what it had been in times past, I
" found discontent to arise in my heart; but all on a
" sudden it darted in my mind, what is required in
" the tenth commandment? Why surely it requireth
" full contentment with our own condition. These
" words turned in my mind many times, until I
" felt a calm within, and I said, surely I have rea-
" son to bless God's name for his goodness to me.—
" And now some months after this having examin-
" ed my case often, and comparing the case of my
" soul now with what it had been in months past,
" I could freely say from my heart, I could not be
" willing to be again in that sleepy state of soul to-
" wards God, and the things that concern my
" everlasting peace, no not to be in the most pros-
" perous condition in temporal things that ever I
" was in all my life. Now I can say, I hunger
" and thirst after the word, it is the delight of my
" soul."

Thus

A P P E N D I X

Thus our dear mother was taught and upheld by the divine hand, in the midst of an evil world; and has lived a little beyond threescore years and ten. Her posterity have increased to threescore, 52 of which are now living. I lived with her, till I was called away to preach the gospel among the people to whom, after my poor manner, I still minister; upon which our correspondence by letter began, whereof I will give the reader some copies and extracts, whereby he may be enabled to form some judgment of her manner of living.

L E T T E R I.

Norwich, January 11, 1747-8.

Dear Child,

I RECEIVED your letters, bearing date *December 17* and *31*, which good news rejoiced my heart, to hear of the goodness of our Lord in those parts. Our family are all in good health, through the goodness of God. The Lord hath sweetly comforted and quickned my soul from time to time: I have had many sweet love-feasts: The Lord hath brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.—The Lord be with you, and keep you from all evil; which is the desire of your loving mother,

ELIZABETH BACKUS.

L E T T E R II.

Norwich, October 21, 1748.

Dear Child,

MY love in Jesus remembered to you, and all the saints with you. I had a sweet taste of love that day you left us, in those words:

But

A P P E N D I X.

19

*But O what condescending ways
He takes to teach his heavenly grace
My eyes with joy and wonder see
What forms of love he bears for me.*

The last Sabbath was a day much to be remembered.—Your grandmother almost left the body. As to my own case, I have had a more abiding sense of the uncertainty of visible things, and of the certainty of invisible things.—

L E T T E R III.

Norwich, April 6, 1749.

Dear Child,

I LONG to see you: It made me glad to see you once more in writing.—I have met with many trials since I saw you, and the Lord has been my strength. Trust ye in him at all times; he is a sure hiding place in trouble.—Remember my love in Christ to all the saints with you; and O that you and we may have our eye upon our captain, and so not be tossed with every wave! O that we may meet at the throne of grace daily! which is the earnest desire of your mother,

ELIZABETH BACKUS.

L E T T E R IV.

Norwich, March 26, 1750.

My dear Son,

I LONG you should hear of, and rejoice with us in the work of God amongst us. It began the fore part of February, and for three weeks or more

* My father's mother, who experienced a remarkable change in her younger years, and lived to a good old age. She died August 24, 1762. *age 94*

more it was as great a time of conviction as I ever saw: Great flocking to hear the gospel preached; meetings every day, especially among the children at our end of the town; sundry of them converted, some backsliders come home, and such adoring free grace, such calls and invitations to sinners, as make the town shake. Some that were in opposition before, are constrained to own the work; others are raging, and trying to hinder the work. It is still a time of conviction with sinners and backsliders. The Lord worketh, and who can let or hinder it? It hath been a time of health here; our family are well. I want to hear from you, and also to see you and your dear wife*. I remember my love in Jesus to the saints in the house where you live, and to all that little flock. From your loving mother,

ELIZABETH BACKUS.

L E T T E R VI.

Norwich, August 27, 1750.

— I WROTE you some account some time ago of the wonders of God among us; we have seen more of it. Backsliders are constrained to bear witness for God.—The Lord is sweetly giving us some drops and foretastes of his love; and, blessed be his name, we shall quickly arrive where sorrow and sighing shall flee away.—

* Mother had never seen her then, as we were married but the fall before.

LETTER

A P P E N D I X

VII

L E T T E R VI

Norwich, October 22, 1750.

Dear Son,

O GIVE glory to God for his goodness to me, a poor worm! On the 5th of October I took cold, and was at night seized with that they call hysteric colic, in extremity of pain all that night, and part of next day; but behold the goodness of God; 2 day or two before, he gave sweet views and foretastes of his love, and of the glorious mansions above, which ravished my heart: I feeling the love of God run so free, thought in myself, what sharp trial is before me? and when it came I still had the relish of it, so that death was no terror to me; and in the greatest extremity had strength to call upon my children, and warn them to flee from the wrath to come. Glory to God for it!

L E T T E R VII

My dear Son, December 11, 1751.

I FIND God is faithful to fulfil his promise, and that promise to me, *in the world ye shall have tribulation.* And I can sometimes say with feeling experience, it is good for me that I have been afflicted; and that God hath in very faithfulness done it. By these things my heart is weaned from the world. O my God, grant it more and more, and give me grace to press on toward the mark.

L E T T E R VII.

Norwich, May 18, 1753.

My dear Children,

I HAVE heard of your afflictions, and the mercies mixed with them; and I can sympathize with you, as being also afflicted; yea, and can say

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he hath punished us less than our iniquities do deserve; yea, and of his own free gift hath bestowed drops of heaven on a poor worm in my weakness.—

LETTER IX.

Norwich, March 20, 1754.

Dear Son,

LAST Friday I was brought to a stand, and made to see the awfulness of trifling away time. I had a view of the field of the slothful, all grown over with thorns and nettles, and the stone wall broken down, and the dreadful poverty that was come upon him. And blessed be God, I had also a view of that strait and narrow way that leads to life. And now I saw again that a Christian cannot enjoy God, and live in conformity to the world; and now I long that Christians would arise and go forward. I live in daily expectation of my great and last change. O that I might improve my time well! —

LETTER X.

June 15, 1754.

I AM still in the furnace, wave after wave rolling over me; and my God is graciously supporting, teaching and comforting my soul from time to time, in the midst of my various trials: Blessed be his name. The case of Zion lies near my heart, but there is hope in God, that is able to deliver.—

LETTER

A P P E N D I X.

L E T T E R XI.

Norwich, *January 13, 1766.*

AS to my own case, God has been trying of me both with mercies and afflictions; and he is good and just in them all; and in the night, when all was in silence, I have often had some teachings and comfortable words set home upon my mind. No one can tell without some experience what it is to have a child called away into the midst of battle, and no hopes that his soul is in the ark of safety. My soul has felt the trial. I knew nothing of *Andrew's* going, till he had put down his hand to go; and my mind was tossed like a wave of the sea an hour or two, till I was brought to see, and give him, and myself, and all mine, up into the hand of God. I saw there was no safety at home nor abroad, but only in subjection and submission to the mind and will of God; and this is what I want every day that I live.—

L E T T E R XII.

Norwich, *August 28, 1756.*

MY outer man is decaying apace; blessed be God for some drops of heaven upon my poor soul, now when every thing here seems to be in a convulsion. There are some with us under soul-concern, but more at *Lebanon*; I hear there have been some conversions there lately: It is the best of news. We have sad news from the fort; and what shall we say when *Israel* falls before their enemies? Is there not an *Acan* among them? O let us search our hearts and our houses, cast away the

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A P P E N D I X

abominable things, and turn to the living God, that it may be well with us. —

L E T T E R XIII.

Norwich, March 6, 1751.

My dear Son,

I AM waiting for my great and last change: Scarce one day hath passed for some months without some realizing of death and eternity; and though I am so full of sin, Jesus hath come over the mountains, and spake peace to my soul. God by his providence hath taken away my daughter *Abell**, and he gave me such strength and support in the time of it, as was wonderful. Blessed be his name. These from your loving mother,

ELIZABETH BACKUS.

L E T T E R XIV.

Norwich, March 31, 1758.

Dear Son,

I AM a poor crazy woman, full of aches both of body and soul, and have been so great part of the winter, for which my soul doth bless the Lord; as these things have been a means to bring me nearer to God. Viewing the state both of church and state, with the awful threatnings in Providence, and the carelessness of people in general, I have had sometimes such distress of mind as I could no ways have born; but by these I have been brought off from dependence upon the creature, and led to the fountain and giver of all good. —

L E T T E R

* Capt. *Joshua Abell*'s wife, her eldest daughter; who was hopefully converted in that glorious year 1741. She died December 29, 1756, soon after the birth of her seventh child.

A P P E N D I X

L E T T E R XV.

Norwich, October 30, 1760.

S E P T E M B E R 19 I got up on my mare at my door, behind Simon, and she had scarce gone her length before she sprang away, and left us both upon the ground. I fell among the stones, and cut a hole in my head, which bled some, and the jounce I had set me into hysteric fits in a minute, which followed me six or seven hours. I had my senses all the while, and a sweet calm and peace in my mind: I felt as well pleased and contented with the providence of God, as if he had suffered me to go and visit my friends in town. O wonderful!

L E T T E R XVI.

Norwich, April 6, O. S. 1759.

T H I S is my birth day, and the same day of the week. Sixty-one years have I lived in this evil world. *Few and evil have the days of my life been.* Time looks short, and eternity near. O that I may live to the glory of God, the little time I may live in the world! My dear son, I have heard nothing from you since last *December*, till last week, but I have not forgot you. My desire is, that you may be faithful in the place where God hath set you, both in public and in private, to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come.—

L E T T E R XVII.

Norwich, June 16, 1760.

Beloved Son,

I R E C E I V E D your letter of *March 22*, and I was much moved with sympathy, and am now even blinded with tears while I write to you.

And

And now I would call upon you also to sympathize with us in the various dispensations of God towards us. It has been a distressing dying time all round us with the pleurisy, and one of the family died with it. — *John* was seized with it extream bad, so there was little hopes of his life. I tended him three weeks, and then I was taken with an ague three or four hours, and a violent fever, sick and faint, all over full of pain; but O the goodness of God to a poor worm! Death was no terror to me. I had a mind calm, waiting to see what God would do with me; I can't say I had any choice; if I had, it was a rather to depart. —

L E T T E R XVIII.

Norwich, April 27, 1762.

My dear Son,

THIS with a great deal of satisfaction I sit down to write a line to you, though I am full of pain and weakness. Your aunt *Anne* is gone before; Oh that I may be ready to follow after! I have not been abroad since last fall but three times. I went to see my sister before her death: It was trying to nature, and yet comfortable, to see her courage in death. —

L E T T E R

* The person that died was a hired man, named *Jeremiah Lewis*. *John* is her youngest child, peculiarly near to her.

† This was Capt. *Richard Hyde's* wife. My brother's letter of the same date says, "Aunt *Anne Hyde* died the 20th inst. after a long and lingering illness, in which she manifested great calmness of mind, and assurance of her well-being in another world; and seemed to leave her family as freely as if it were only for a short journey, and then expected to meet them again."

These are the words of my brother *Simon Backus*, whose exemplary behaviour had rendered him very dear to many; but death,

A P P E N D I X

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L E T T E R XIX.

Norwich, October 31, 1765.

I HAVE been tried without and within. In *October* I had a clear view of the all-seeing presence of God, that it fills heaven and earth, and the room where I was, and I saw myself a loathsome creature; and I could say with *Job*, *now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* Now I see I had been living to myself, and working for myself, when God's glory should have been all my aim. And now this text is much in my mind; *and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* Now I felt love to the Christians, and to them that are in the dark; O that they might see the light! And I want the forgiveness of every one, and I ask it of you*.

Give my love to your wife and children, and to all that love Jesus. These in haste from your loving mother,

ELIZABETH BACON.

I am a poor old woman, almost worn out, and at times I think I can feelingly say those words of *Dr. Watts*,

Jesus, my Lord, I know his name,

His name is all my trust;

Nor will be put my soul to shame,

Or let my hope be lost.

Mother's

death, which spares none, took him away in the midst of his days, by a consumption. He died in a comfortable frame, *February* 16, 1764, aged 35.

* I could not transcribe this passage without observing, that perhaps those who knew her, would have thought she had as little need of others forgiveness as any in the land, and least of all to ask it of a poor child; but the nearer the soul's views are of a holy God, the farther it is from any trust in its own doings.

A P P E N D I X.

Mother's growing infirmities prevented her writing much more, so that I had but two or three short letters from her after this; in one of which she says, "O! God is good to me! He cometh over the mount of my sins, and speaks peace; once by this word, *I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.*" And in the last I ever had from her she says, "I am here yet dragging along the poor remains of life, and oh how many mercies! I have cause to sing of mercy as well as judgment." About a month before she left the world she had such an ill turn, that it was thought she could not continue long, after which she had some revival, whereupon, as a letter informs me, "she said to one of the brethren of the church who came to see her, she desired his prayers for her; since it seemed she must come back into this world again, for a little season, that God would enable her to spend all to his glory. She said, if it had been God's will, she should rather have gone and left the world." Mother had an apprehension that she should drop away suddenly, and my brother, who lived with her, says, she often told him; when going to bed, where he might find her grave cloaths on any sudden occasion; and such an occasion he had on *January 26, 1769*; when after sleeping a good part of the night, she awaked about five in the morning with a coughing turn, and dropped away so soon, that her children in the other part of the house had but just time to get in to see her breathe her last. I shall beg leave to close the whole with an address to my relations.

My

A P P E N D I X

My beloved Friends,

I HAVE ventured so far to disclose intimate friendship, as to give a few extracts, and some whole copies of letters, which in the course of twenty years I have received from my dear mother, the originals of which, in her own hand-writing, you are welcome to see when you please. The tedious distance of fourscore miles deprived me of the privilege of daily converse with her, and of that enjoyment of her edifying example which others of you were favoured with; yet that disadvantage is now in some measure balanced with above fifty kind epistles, wherein she being dead yet speaketh. Thus a kind Providence makes all things to work for our good. Had it not been for our former distance, I should doubtless have been now more deprived of her company than I am; for I suppose she rarely if ever wrote to any that were near; and I am fully persuaded, that no others can draw her true picture so well as her own pen hath done it, notwithstanding her little practice in writing. Others might no doubt have set her off with more polite language, and in more gaudy colours; but that, like paint, mars true beauty. I shall desire you to pass by her expressions of strong affection for a poor child, and fix your attention upon the lively features which she has exhibited of a SINCERE CHRISTIAN.

What an union and due proportion appears in her of those two great points, a trust alone in Christ's righteousness, with a strict regard to holiness? Who can more fully renounce all kind of dependance on their own doings, than she often does? Yet let the legalist produce an instance, if he can, of a more strict and constant regard to a holy life, than she has

has shewn. Again, here is a strong assurance united with great diligence. How unshaken was her confidence in her great Redeemer, which made her often say, "death is no terror to me;" while she still saw the "awfulness of trifling away time, and that "a Christian cannot enjoy God, and live in conformity to the world?" She had higher motives to engage her to improve time well than the fear of perishing. Here also appears true humility, without diminishing of divine bounty. A feigned humility often moves persons to deny or undervalue what God has wrought for them, or by them; while pride will influence the creature to take the creator's gifts to set off self with. Few I believe have steered clearer of those extremes than our departed friend; and the nearer she got to heaven, the lower she lay before God and man; seeing herself "a loathsome creature?" Not because she had fallen into any outward scandal; no, but because she had been "working for self, when God's glory "should have been *all* her aim:" Therefore she could say, I abhor myself; while her hope was still firm in Christ. Hence what a harmony do we here see between godly sorrow and spiritual joy! Those scriptures were eminently verified in her life, *we glory in tribulation; and, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*

Mistake me not, my friends, as though I was aiming to garnish the sepulchre of a deceased parent. My aim is as much above any such thing, as the poet's plan was above the painter's work, with regard to Mr. Hervey*. What I aim ^{at} is to engage your

* "Williams, 'tis your's to bid the canvas wear,

"By art illusive, Hervey's form and air.

"Oh!

your attention to the *beauties of Holiness*, which shined in her, that you may *imitate* her lively and lovely example. One of the most artful methods that the enemies to the power of godliness have taken in our day, to promote their soul-destroying schemes, has been by representing, that the indwellings of the Holy Ghost, and his quickning and comforting influences, which those saints enjoyed that we read of in the bible, were favours peculiar to the days of inspiration, or to the scenes of martyrdom, and not to be expected in these times of reason and liberty; but as such notions are directly contrary to the current of scripture, and exactly resemble the language of those hypocrites who said, *the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord saith us not*, Ezek. ix. 9; so the Lord hath not left himself without a number of witnesses, even in these licentious times, to the divine reality of his spiritual, life-giving and soul-comforting presence with and in his saints; among which I believe this mother in our Israel ought to be reckoned as one: Whose testimony therefore, I think, ought not to be forgotten nor concealed; especially among her numerous posterity, who are doubtless willing to enjoy the temporal legacies which she has left them: And can one of them be willing to miss of this *good part which shall not be taken away*? We are all in an evil world, where we are constantly exposed to

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changes.

" Oh! with like happy labour could I trace
 " Each virtue, each exalted Christian grace;
 " Each heavenly gift with which his soul was blest;
 " And fix the bright assemblage in my breast;
 " Then how transcendent far would be my plan:
 " To pass his mimic shade:—I'd *be* the man."

Harvey's *Life*.

changes, troubles and death: And who would not think it a great favour, if seized with extremity of pain, to have, "sweet views and foretastes of God's love, and of the glorious mansions above, so that death should be no terror to them?" or upon a sudden fall or surprize, to have their "senses all the while, and a sweet calm and peace of mind, so as to feel as well pleased and contented with the Providence of God, as if visiting near friends?" What are all the kingdoms and glories of this world in comparison with such enjoyments! Well, my friends, this happiness, and more than tongue can express, is freely held forth in the gospel, and the call is, *O taste and see that the Lord is good!* And ever remember that you are to come and eat *without money and without price.* In Christ there is the gift of *righteousness* to deliver from our greatest guilt, and *abundance of grace* to cleanse our souls, and supply all our needs, so as to make us holy and happy for ever.

Man's foundation error is, an imagination that there is something better than the will of God; some way better at present to walk in than his precepts, and some *interest* better than to be at his disposal. This evil imagination moves us to go astray, and to turn every one to his own way, instead of submitting to divine government; but the *natural* as well as *moral* consequence of such conduct can't possibly be any other than misery; for when we pursue a separate interest of our own, we must support and defend it, against all dangers and enemies. And oh! how dreadful the task! How insupportable the burthen!

The

The friend we now mention was well sensible of this, and therefore said, in a letter not before transcribed, dated March 24, 1752: "I tell you
 " I am quite sick of myself, the more I am acquainted with my heart. But oh, how good is my
 " Lord to me, who does many a time speak a
 " word to my soul, that gives it a life, with
 " a view of the stability of the covenant, of
 " his faithfulness and loving kindness, and the
 " sweetness of his *kingly power in subduing us to him-
 " self!* Praised be his name!" Take notice that
 his *kingly power in subduing us to himself* is sweet to the
 gracious soul. So in a letter already recited she says,
 " I saw there was no safety at home nor abroad,
 " but only in subjection and submission to the mind
 " and will of God: And this is what I want every
 " day that I live." And surely we all need it as
 much as she did. And oh! my brethren and
 friends, let us all remember the doleful case of the
 Jews, who boasted of being Abraham's children and
 Moses' disciples, while they neither believed his
 sermons, nor performed Abraham's works.
John v. 46. and viii. 39. It is undoubtedly a
 great privilege to be born of pious parents; and
 the greatest thing in it is, the enjoyment of their
 prayers, instruction and influence concerning the
 way wherein we should go: Consequently those
 children who disregard the same, will have the
 greater condemnation. How inexcusable then shall
 we be found, if any of us neglect the great salvation
 exhibited in the gospel, which has been clearly set
 before us, not only by public preaching, but also by
 lively examples of near friends! On the other hand,
 those who are not slothful, but followers of them
 who

A P P E N D I X

who through faith and patience inherit the promises, they will find, that though their present parting is grievous, yet their meeting hereafter will be glorious, when they shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Context, verse 17, 18.

FOR the readers satisfaction I would observe, that all the foregoing testimonies are carefully transcribed from originals, in mother's own hand-writing, which I have to shew to any who desire it; all the liberty I have taken is, in a few places to leave out a word or two, where that would favour the sense, but never to add a single word; and where I have left out a sentence, or part of a letter, I have made a dash thus —

The errors of the press which have been observed correct thus; page 14, line 13, dele *be*. p. 17, l. 2, for *is* read *it*. p. 5 of the appendix, at the end of the note, read *aged* 94.

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